

# **SOUTH EAST EUROPE REVIEW**

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## **Albanian emigration and the Greek labour market: Economic symbiosis and social ambiguity**

### **Introduction**

Of all regions in the world, the Balkans are perhaps the most profoundly affected by history. By this, I do not mean one history but a concatenation of different histories – each with its own logic and set of values. For Greece, the overwhelming contemporary history has produced a ‘fear of Albanians’, in both a personal security sense and also in the sense of their possible role in the Greek polity. Its immediate precursor was the 45-year long isolation of the cold war, when the inviolable border between northern<sup>1</sup> and southern Epirus lay forgotten like a distant memory from the past. Prior to that was the refusal of the Greeks of Northern Epirus in 1913 to become part of the newly-formed Albania, their formation of a provisional autonomous government (Pentzopoulos, 2002: 28) and the subsequent failure of the Greek delegation at the Paris Conference of 1919 to achieve annexation of the territory to Greece (Veremis, 1995: 16-17), a long-established claim of Greek territorial right (Koliopoulos and Veremis, 2002: 331). Even further back lies the centuries-long stability of the Ottoman Empire and the complex relations between different ethnic communities within it. Thus, when we read that ‘borders in this region induce a feeling of nationalism’ (Alkan, 2002: 59) and that the traditional political culture of the Balkans embodies ‘collectivism, authoritarianism, animosity to individual rights and to ethnic and religious diversity and differences’ (Aligica, 2003: 307), we should understand that mass migration within the Balkan region is almost certain to show a different character than in other places.

In this paper, I try to give an outline of the modern history of Albanian migration to Greece, the role of Albanians in the Greek economy, policy measures by the Greek state and the complex reactions of Greek society. I conclude with a brief synthesis of these different approaches since, in the case of Greece especially, their separation is somewhat artificial.

### **Albanian emigration to Greece**

Our attention is focused on Albanian emigratory flows in the 1990s after the collapse of the communist regime, but we should be aware that migration into Greece is not a new phenomenon for Albanians. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they would travel by foot across the Greek mountains for seasonal work in textile and agricultural businesses in Greece (Psimmenos and Kassimati, 2004). This was itself a continuation of an age-

- 1 Northern Epirus roughly corresponds to the southern-most districts of Korçë and Gjirokastrë in Albania. The number of ethnic Greeks there is highly contested, but was recorded as 40 000 in the 1961 Census (Poulton, 1991: 195). The 1989 Census estimated the minority at 59 000, although the Greek government claimed it to be at least 300 000 (Pastore, 1998: Fn. 7).

old practice of temporary labour migration – known as *kurbet* – in the Ottoman area, a tradition which is strongly represented in Albanian folklore and music (Mai and Schwander-Sievers, 2003: 945). The *Arvanites* in Greece are the historical legacy of such Ottoman migrations and constituted a significant part of the tiny populace of Athens at the birth of the modern Greek state in 1830. A wave of Albanian migrations started in 1912 after the Balkan Wars and continued until 1945, when the new post-war regime prohibited emigration (Martin *et al.*, 2002: 107).

In 1991, groups of several tens of thousands of Albanian migrants fled as asylum-seekers to Italy, where the first group was accepted but a later one rejected (Martin *et al.*, 2002: 105). A similar number crossed the mountain borders into Greece. The immediate Greek response was near-hysterical, with allegations of the terrible criminality of Albanians and the need to secure the borders against them (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004: 3). However, the illegal flow of Albanians continued, despite a new repressive law in 1991 and despite mass expulsions<sup>2</sup> of hundreds of thousands of Albanians every year. By 1998, some 240 000 Albanians had registered for legalisation (under the so-called ‘white card’), representing 65% of the non-EU, ‘non-ethnic Greek’ alien population resident in Greece. The 2001 Census counted 440 000 Albanians<sup>3</sup> – again around 65% of the non-EU, ‘non-ethnic Greek’ aliens – of which 46 000 (excluding ethnic Greek Albanians) were registered as school students (Anthopoulou, 2004). By 2001, over two million immigrants (mainly Albanian) had been expelled without legal process for not being in possession of legal residence permits. However, as has been demonstrated repeatedly in academic analyses, there were, in reality, no legal routes for immigration into Greece: the 1991 Immigration Law aimed at excluding all immigration, regardless of the economic need for workers in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards and Fakiolas, 1999).

The initial entry of Albanians into Greece in 1991 was via the mountainous border but, by the late 1990s, it was not clear that this was, in fact, an easy route nor that it had been possible for the many women and children resident in Greece to have entered by this means. Nicholson notes the various routes and costs of entry into Greece, including smuggling and trafficking. However, the principal route of entry in 2001 and 2002 seems to have been by way of underground visas from the Greek consulate in Tiranë – at a cost of around £1 000 (Nicholson, 2002: 440). Nicholson also notes that legally-obtained visas are cancelled by the Greek police without reason whereas smuggling routes constitute better value for money as the smugglers do not demand payment until successful delivery (Nicholson, 2002: 439). Thus, we might expect

- 2 There seems to be no legal basis for these expulsions which the Ministry of Public Order has recently re-defined as ‘redirections’. A lack of respect for the law on the part of state actors, particularly laws concerning individual rights, is a serious and continuing problem in Greece.
- 3 In theory, this figure should include ethnic Greek Albanians without Greek citizenship. However, owing to the highly ethnocentric behaviour of Greek census collectors, it is almost certain that many were counted as Greeks if they had a good command of the Greek language. Thus, the number of Albanians may be higher than recorded.

women and children to have entered Greece through underground visas, smuggling routes and through being trafficked,<sup>4</sup> whereas men are more likely to have undertaken the difficult mountain-border crossings. Almost no serious research has been done on this (or on any other topic of Greek immigration management), but a survey of 500 Albanians in Thessaloniki in 2000 (Labrianidis and Lyberaki, 2001) revealed that all of the women had entered legally, although mostly overstaying the validity of their visas, while more than half the men had entered, and remained, illegally. A similar ratio was observed by Hatziprokopiou (2003) in 2001-2 with a small sample of 30 Albanians.

By January 2004, after three legalisation programmes and two framework immigration laws in 1991 and 2001, the number of valid residence permits held by Albanians was a mere 143 000.<sup>5</sup> The number of Special Permits held by ethnic Greek Albanians is unknown, as the Ministry of Public Order refuses to give such information on the grounds of 'national security'. King and Mai (2002) give a figure of 80 000 who had applied for the Card, although this figure seems quite high and may include many non-genuine applicants. Given the census figure of 440 000 Albanians, of which 390 000 adults, presumably, need permits (along with the figure of 240 000 who had applied in 1998), the latest data suggest that either many Albanians have left Greece since 2001 (for which there is no evidence) or that there are now in 2004 at least 250 000 illegally resident Albanians in Greece.

### **Albanians in the Greek economy**

Given the predominantly illegal status of (Albanian) immigrants in Greece throughout the 1990s and, for that matter, well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it should be evident that serious and systematic research would be required to understand the employment activities of several hundred thousand illegal workers. Furthermore, the Greek economy has the largest shadow economy of any EU country – typically estimated at 28-35% – and, as in the rest of southern Europe, illegal immigrants are attractive for their cheap and illegal labour (Baldwin-Edwards, 1999). In fact, not only has there been no systematic research undertaken but there has also been no real understanding of the employment of Greeks in the economy, and no statistical data on work permits, residence permits or other such information up at least as far as January 2004. The Greek state has financed a small number of partial projects through traditional political party clientelist channels although the conclusions of such research are, automatically, in question.

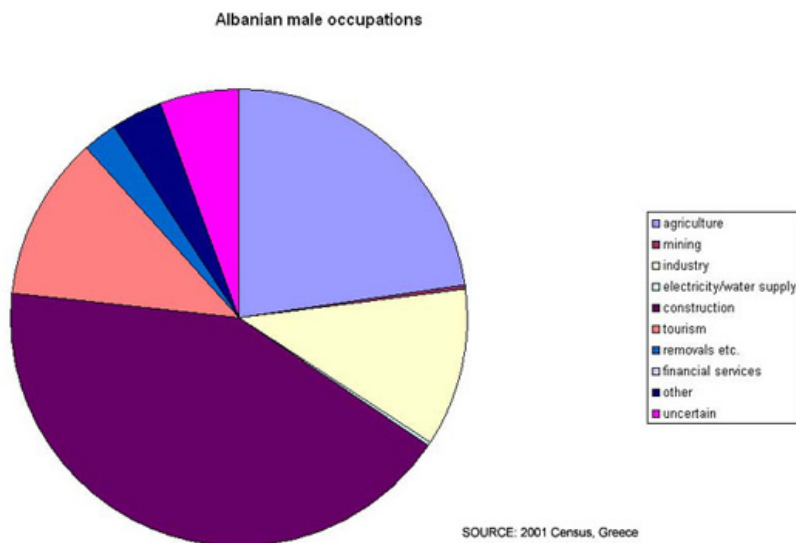
The earliest such study (Lianos *et al.*, 1996), conducted in 1993, looked only at northern Greece and concluded that 22% of unskilled farm work had been taken over by immigrants, that there was little substitution of immigrant for native workers but a

4 For detailed accounts of some of the horrific aspects of trafficking in women and children into Greece, see Emke-Poulopoulou (2001), Lazaridis (2001) and Psimmenos (2000).

5 For these and all statistical data on immigrants in Greece, the only comprehensive published source in Greek or English is that provided by the author, on the website of the *Mediterranean Migration Observatory*: <http://www.mmo.gr>

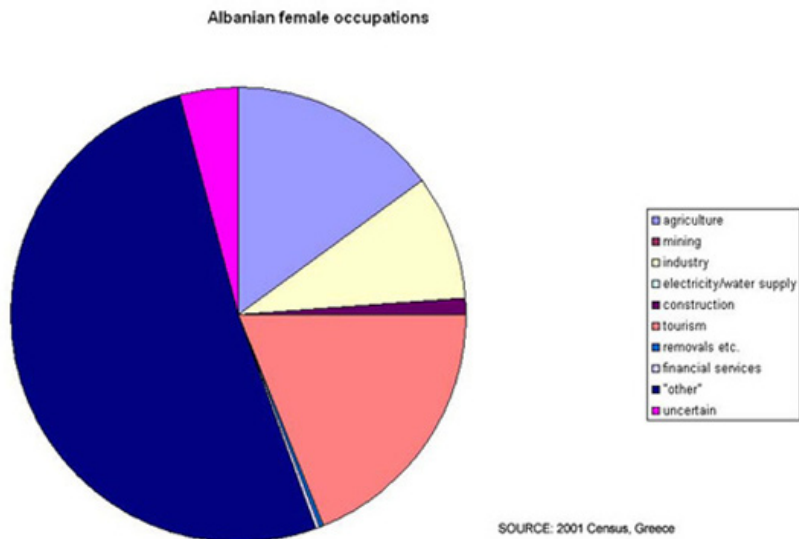
large potential net contribution in the construction sector of 1% of GDP. Later, smaller pieces of research<sup>6</sup> tended to confirm this general picture, with two additional conclusions: that about 20% of immigrants in small businesses were actually keeping such businesses afloat; and that the geographical proximity to Albania determined local supply-demand ratios and wage levels in farm work (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999: 214). The previously-mentioned study of Albanians in Thessaloniki in 2000 (Labrianidis and Lyberaki, 2001)<sup>7</sup> established a better temporal understanding of Albanian employment in Greece: over just a few years, through increased ability in the Greek language and a better understanding of employment possibilities, the Albanians in their sample tended to move out of unskilled farm work and rapidly into construction, small firm employment, technicians' work and transport services. Eighty two per cent of the sample held steady employment, with 57% paying regular social insurance. Of the men, 30% worked in construction and 24% in industrial small companies; women tended to work as domestic cleaners (27%) while a quite high, and increasing, proportion (28%) were housekeepers.

The 2001 census data tend to confirm this picture for the whole Greek economy, suggesting a significant shift of the locus of immigrant – primarily Albanian – employment by the late 1990s. The first Chart below indicates the self-declared professions of male Albanian workers, numbering some 170 000, while the second shows the pattern of female employment.



6 These are reported in Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild (1999).

7 The main findings are reported in English in Lyberaki (2004).



The predominant area of male employment is construction (42%), followed by agriculture (23%) and industry and tourism at 12% each. In contrast, 52% of women declared the category 'other', mainly, presumably, housekeeping while 19% worked in tourism, 15% in agriculture and 9% in industry. Only 54 000 women declared themselves as working out of 182 000 in the census.<sup>8</sup>

Additional information is contained in the registrations for social insurance with IKA, the main state agency.<sup>9</sup> About 14% of IKA members are without Greek citizenship, of which half are Albanians. In employment in sectors other than construction, there are 95 000 insured Albanians; for construction, there are 80 000, representing 30% of all insured construction workers. We can suppose that the actual employment of Albanians in the shadow economy is more extensive than this, especially in the construction sector which has been booming amidst preparations for the 2004 Olympic Games in Greece.

Immigrants in Greece work in a highly-segmented labour market, in temporary, part-time, heavy or dangerous occupations – the jobs that Greeks refuse to do, especially in construction, heavy industry and agriculture. Essentially, the role of immigrants in southern Europe has been to compensate, on a temporary basis, for structural defects in labour markets (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002). These defects are of three types:

- 8 Allowing for 25-30 000 female children out of the 182 000, this suggests a participation rate of only 36%.
- 9 Agricultural workers and the self-employed are covered by other agencies which apparently do not collect data.

- insufficient labour supply
- inflexible labour markets through over-regulation
- uncompetitive low-productivity sectors.

Over time, immigrants have been able to improve their situation and increase earnings, as suggested above: however, this is not to concur with the idyllic conclusions offered by Labrianidis and Lyberaki (2001). Immigrant employment is almost solely in the secondary sector, regardless of skill levels; is frequently under-insured or illegal; and often takes places in abusive conditions (Psimmenos and Kassimati, 2004). Furthermore, the prognosis for this employment after the construction boom of 2004 is not good, as for employment generally in Greece. Limited anecdotal evidence suggests that some Albanian migrant workers are preparing for the worst and may leave Greece. Additionally, the lack of legal status of so many immigrant workers (see below) can be seen as a deliberate policy option by the Greek state to expel a future excess labour supply.

### The role of the Greek state

Elsewhere (Baldwin-Edwards and Fakiolas, 1999; Baldwin-Edwards, 2004), I have argued that Greek immigration policy since 1991 has been fundamentally exclusionary, with no evaluation of labour market needs and no realistic possibility of legal immigration from Balkan countries. Furthermore, this policy arena can be seen as a contest between three competing forces<sup>10</sup> – traditionalist, xenophobic and protectionist interests; modernising technocratic and competition-promoting lobbyists; and external interests, primarily regional Balkan matters and relations with the EU. This analysis can still be maintained, although the principal results seem to have come from the first, conservative lobby.

Another approach to Greek policy is suggested by Jordan *et al.*, 2003. Taking as a starting point the illegal presence of immigrants, they examine the bureaucratic implementation of the first legalisation process, which started in 1998. Their conclusions are remarkable in that they identify a:

Complex culture of discretion...[with] nationalist and neo-entrepreneurial overtone. [State officials] do not perceive immigrants as their clients, but the local employers and Greek society as a whole...Their practices are informed by preconceptions of cultural 'authenticity' and ethnic and cultural prejudices. (Jordan *et al.*, 2003: 383)

In this 'culture of discretion', the temporary staff recruited to deal with immigrants were not only untrained, but themselves started to develop informal networks of personalised contacts and financial corruption, alongside the neo-liberal values of efficiency and competitiveness. In other words, this is a mix of traditional Balkan/Greek practices along with some modern values – but always prioritising personal ideology/interests and Greek cultural preferences. Other research conducted by Panteion University<sup>11</sup> on 'gate-keepers' also confirms the cultural stereotyping in

10 See Aligica (2003) for a comparable dualistic analysis of all policy areas in Balkan countries.

state agencies, in which immigrants are seen as 'undesirable' through their nationality (particularly Albanian and other Balkan) and are frequently denied legal status or work as a consequence.

The landmark policy initiatives in Greek immigration policy are the following:

- 1991 Immigration Law
- 1998 legalisation procedures (white card and green card)
- 2001 Immigration Law and legalisation procedure

The 1991 Law was little more than a policy of exclusion and expulsion specifically aimed at Albanians.

The 1998 legalisation, in its final negotiating stages, was blocked from encompassing Albanians by a government minister; however, this was later overturned by the Prime Minister (Baldwin-Edwards and Fakiolas, 1999: 192). A similar desire to exclude all Albanians from legal status has been noted for prefectures bordering Albania in commentaries which were submitted on the proposed 1998 legalisation (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999: 216). The eventual programme had 372 000 applicants for the six-month 'white card' but the excess number of demands acted to reduce the number of applicants for a 'green card' to 228 000. The green card was generally awarded for a one-year duration, occasionally two, but only very poor data have been released on actual grants of legal status. My own calculations suggest that there were never more than 170 000 legalised immigrants at any one time, and even this was not achieved until April 2001. Reasons for this very low figure are contained in the above-mentioned research of Psimmenos and Kasimati (reported in Jordan *et al.*, 2003); the heavily bureaucratic procedures, which made great demands on both applicant and state; and the short duration of the permits granted – usually one or two years.

The 2001 Law made little innovation other than devolving to local authorities the power to grant one-year work and residence permits, as well as introducing the common EU pattern of requiring immigrants to apply for work permits at overseas consulates. This Law also contained a last-minute legalisation process, conceding a six-month 'green'<sup>12</sup> card' to applicants. The Greek state has released no data at all on the results of this process but it is generally reported in the Greek press that it has been a complete fiasco, with few receiving legal status and, often, only after the expiry of permits. The transition from 'green cards' to work and residence permits, as required by the 2001 Law, has also been seriously problematic. A particular difficulty has been with the renewal of work permits which, in the law, requires no more than registration for social insurance and regular employment.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, legal ambiguities created opportunities for the 'culture of discretion' and for the openly xenophobic enactment of public policy by individual officials, as well as for corruption in selling illegitimate

11 EQUAL: 'IFESTOS' programme, results not yet published.

12 One might wonder at the choice and meaning of these colours. At one point in the late 1990s, it was announced that no more green cards could be given out because the Greek state had run out of green card, so perhaps the chosen colours reflect existing stockpiles of coloured paper in Greece.



work permits.<sup>14</sup> The number of applicants for work permits in 2002 was recorded as 351 000 – a figure which sits well with the census declaration of around 360 000 workers without EU nationality or ethnic Greek status. By January 2004, only 228 000 valid residence permits<sup>15</sup> existed – reflecting the extreme difficulty faced by immigrants in acquiring legal status.

In summary, Greek policy on immigrants contains an exclusionary ideology as regards all others than ethnic Greeks. The various legalisation initiatives have been implemented by untrained officials with an explicitly nationalist and xenophobic mentality and, reportedly, in abusive circumstances. The entire legal framework for immigration, of *entry* (in an overseas consulate), of *legal work* and *stay* (formerly with OAED<sup>16</sup> and now with local government) and of *legal residence* (formerly the Ministry of Public Order and now the Ministry of Interior), is fundamentally hostile to immigrants and beset by corruption. There is a continuous history of systematic corruption and abuse by Greek state officials, in consulates, ministries, the police, and other agencies – this also includes the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women by state officials (Baldwin-Edwards and Fakiolas, 1999: 197-8). It seems that the European Commission has made no effort to pressure Greece into reform: only the heavy-handed humiliations dealt by the US government have yielded any positive results in anti-trafficking measures. However, the xenophobic immigration measures look set to remain or, even, worsen.

### Albanians in Greek society

From their very first arrival in Greece, Albanian migrants were stigmatised as ‘criminals’ by the Greek media and became stereotyped as ‘dangerous Albanians’ (Karydis, 1992). Newspapers cast Albanians as:

...“cunning”, ‘primitive’ and above all ‘untrustworthy’, a source of danger and threat”. These stereotypes...coincided with Alia’s amnesty to a couple of hundred political prisoners in 1991. Newspapers like *Ethnos* published articles about the released prisoners who would commit various crimes once they enter the country. (Lazaridis and Wickens, 1999: 648)

- 13 This is the official position of the Ombudsman’s Office and of the Ministry of Interior; it was opposed by the former PASOK General Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, who issued circulars with ambiguous demands for evidence of actual levels of social insurance contributions for the renewal of work permits. Without a work permit, the Interior Ministry cannot normally issue a residence permit.
- 14 ‘Labour Official Sold Permits’ *Kathimerini* March 15 2004. The Head of an Athens Prefecture’s labour department and another worker were arrested and charged with forgery, money-laundering and organised crime. They charged a minimum of €300 to expedite applications and larger amounts for incomplete applications.
- 15 Residence permits can, in certain cases, be given out without work permits, so the number of valid work permits is, presumably, lower. There are no data available in the Ministry of Labour.
- 16 The Greek Manpower Agency, a branch of the Ministry of Labour, which was responsible for implementing green card procedures.

Subsequently, the reporting of crime statistics created a 'moral panic' in Greek society about the level of crime caused by immigrants, and Albanians in particular. There were repeated claims, such as that reported in a leading newspaper, *Kathimerini*, in January 1996, that 60% of all recorded crimes were committed by foreigners, mostly Albanians (Lazaridis and Wickens, 1999: 648). In fact, as demonstrated in the few scientific analyses of immigrants and crime in Greece,<sup>17</sup> the statistics cited were of 'persons known to the police' and not even of immigrants prosecuted for crimes, let alone convicted of any. Furthermore, detailed analysis of all available evidence suggests that immigrant crime is largely confined to robbery, theft and beggary, whereas serious crimes (murder, rape) are committed overwhelmingly by Greeks (Baldwin-Edwards, 2001). However, such was the strength of the mythology created by the Greek press in the early 1990s that, by 1995, some 90% of the Greek police believed that the increased crime level was caused by immigrants (Karydis, 1996) and focused their arrests on this minority – to the great detriment of actually dealing with rising crime in Greece.

Writing about the 'social construction' of burglary in Greece, Bakalaki (2003) makes an explicit linkage between conceptions of the nation-state as a household operating on the principle of the male line of descent and immigrants as potentially criminal intruders. Thus, the rise in burglaries over the 1990s is not seen by Greeks as an aspect of modernisation and increased affluence (one might add to this, as the consequence of massive increased income inequality alongside major increases in the cost of living) but, rather, as the result of the presence of the 'other' – immigrants, Roma and Muslims.

The mass media have exercised a little more responsibility since about 2000 and have largely abandoned their stereotyping of immigrants as criminals, but the damage, in terms of public perception, has already been done. There is some evidence to suggest that Greeks' increased personal contact with immigrants (Albanians) tends to weaken or remove negative stereotyping. However, there is a considerable regional variation across Greece in the perception of immigrants, with the most negative being found in regions close to the Albanian border and in the city of Thessaloniki (Baldwin-Edwards and Safilios-Rothschild, 1999: 217-9). A major issue for Greeks is the lack of legal status of Albanians and others: however, it will be recalled that the great extent of the illegal presence of immigrants exists largely through the exclusionary policies of the Greek state and not through the choice or behaviour of immigrants themselves.

### **Racism and the social exclusion of Albanians in Greece since 2000**

The 2001 census showed that roughly half the Albanian workers in Greece had been resident for more than five years – a significantly higher proportion than almost all other nationalities except those from the Philippines. After Greece actually started to conform to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and permitted all immigrant

17 See, for example, Baldwin-Edwards, 2001; Karydis, 1996.

children, regardless of their parents' legal status, to attend school, the numbers of immigrant children have increased by 2002/3 to around 9% of the total school population.<sup>18</sup> For 1999/2000, there were 46 000 Albanian children and 7 000 ethnic Greek Albanian children in primary and secondary schools; in 1995/6, these figures were 9 000 and 7 000 respectively (Anthopoulou, 2004). However, these aggregate figures conceal great difference across Greece since the number of Greek children is in continuous decline and, in some schools, immigrants, even by 2000, constituted 45% of the school population (Dimakos and Tasiopoulou, 2003: 309). The major increase since 1995 has been in 'non-ethnic Greek' Albanian children; this reflects the increased family reunification of Albanians, easier access to state schools and a degree of social integration which could not have been anticipated in the early 1990s.

There has clearly been progress since the early days of Albanian immigration into Greece and the recorded harsh conditions of Albanians in Athens (Psimmenos, 1995). Yet, there remain substantial issues of racial discrimination and social exclusion, in particular directed at Albanians. As Albanians have carved out a niche for themselves in the Greek economy, principally through tough, exploitative employment with long hours, a stereotypical 'Albanian worker' has emerged – one who is:

Employed on a day basis, is being transferred across different places, has ephemeral relations while economic relations are not limited to work objectives but... include the social and personal spheres (Psimmenos and Kassimati, 2004).

Similarly, 'working like an Albanian' means working with no public or personal life, with no aims or plans and being completely disoriented from place and belonging. Furthermore, this reputation for hard work is not accompanied by social respect from Greeks: indeed, it is explicitly linked with disdain for those who have low status work. Status (and not ability or experience) tends to be a qualifying condition for decent employment in Greece and almost automatically excludes almost all foreigners (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002). Aside from Albanians' lowly employment status, the precarious legal status of six-month and one-year permits, or no legal permit at all, along with the reported cases of Greek police tearing up valid permits in order to humiliate Albanian immigrants, all of these are an expression of the exercise of Greek hegemonic power.

In the social sphere, there are comparable phenomena. Within state schools, research on the racism exhibited by Greek pupils towards their immigrant peers shows extraordinarily negative opinions, with *no variations according to school attainment or the socio-economic background* of Greek children. Their negative views are linked with criminality, employment-taking and diseases of immigrants: the only positive comments made are of immigrants' cheap labour (Dimakos and Tasiopoulou, 2003: 313). These gloomy findings are consistent with recent serious problems concerning the right to carry the flag, held by the student with the highest marks – a ceremony traditionally carried out in celebration of the refusal by Greece to allow Mussolini to occupy Greece in WWII. Clearly the flag is a Greek flag and despite, a 2001 law giving

18 Own calculations from unpublished data.

immigrant children the right to carry it, in several schools in northern Greece, Albanian children were stopped by their Greek peers and parents from exercising this right.<sup>19</sup>

In the housing market, it is still quite normal to see advertisements, both in the press and also on the street, saying 'For Rent: No Immigrants'. Interviews with Albanians show that denial of housing occurs systematically and is a serious problem in finding accommodation (Hatziprokopiou, 2003: 1 045). Thus, immigrants have started to cluster in ethnic ghettos which are primarily the run-down areas of Athens and other cities; however, even where they are permitted to rent, landlords have recently started to demand much higher rents than they would of Greeks. The division of cities into areas of class or ethnicity is a new phenomenon in Greece, which had always followed the Mediterranean city paradigm of mixed neighbourhoods (Leontidou, 1985). Also emerging are partially-hidden ethnic economies, involving many nationalities in self-supporting micro-systems of economic survival in an increasingly expensive Greece.<sup>20</sup> Immigrant networks, from the very first, have proved important to all migrants in Greece and have now developed into sophisticated information machinery and support mechanisms (Hatziprokopiou, 2003: 1 049-51).

Finally, concerning social relations, it is clear that, generally, immigrants occupy a distinct social space – even claiming specific geographical locations such as squares for meeting and finding work. Pavlou cites a case in 1997 when local Greeks wanted to 'cleanse' the squares and public places of immigrants when Thessaloniki was the Cultural Capital of Europe (Pavlou, 2001: 140). Albanians, along with other nationalities, have been observed as changing their names into a Greek form in order better to be accepted by the Greek community (Labrianidis and Lyberaki, 2001: 174). Another integration strategy has been noted by Hatziprokopiou (2003: 1 050-1) in which Albanian Muslim families arrange to have their children baptised as Greek Orthodox, an occasion central to Greek national identity and which requires a Greek godfather to look after the child's interests throughout childhood and adulthood. Inter-marriage between Albanians and Greeks would be a good indicator of the extent of social integration but, while it seems that there has been some inter-marrying, particularly in rural areas where young male farmers were left with no potential wives because of internal migration by young women (Kassimis *et al.*, 2001), there are no data and no investigations on the issue. Generally, Albanians and Greeks do not mix socially and it is likely that mixed marriages are specific cases of close employment co-operation between Greeks and Albanians.

### **Some concluding thoughts**

In my opening paragraph, I warned that intra-Balkan migrations are, inevitably, different from other, more normal, patterns of migration. Greece has shown herself in the management of immigration clearly to be pre-eminently a Balkan rather than Eu-

19 For a detailed report on this and the extensive press coverage, see Baldwin-Edwards (2003).

20 As always, there is little or no research done on these issues in Greece.

ropean country, with the emphasis on nationalist history, state corruption, the lack of individual rights and an arrogant disregard for facts or statistical data. In one sense, Albanians are culturally suited to the Greek environment, owing to similar histories and cultures: in another, their historical and cultural proximity means that they cannot be accepted as Albanians. In line with the 'ethnic cleansing' so predominant in the Balkans, whether it be through state violence (as in Serbia), through exchanged populations (as with Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria) or through forced assimilation into a national culture (as in Greece), it seems that Greeks cannot tolerate Albanians residing in the country. Their very presence challenges the foundations of a supposedly de-Balkanised modern Greece, as do the claims of Slavic Greeks in Macedonia and of Turks in Thrace.

Following the unique logic of modern Greek Balkanism, there are nothing but contradictions in the relationship of Greece and Greek people to Albanian migrants. It may be helpful to enumerate a few of these. Firstly, Greek people want legalised immigrants, but the Greek state wants illegal/semi-legal ones that it can control and manipulate or expel. Secondly, the Greek economy needs temporary, semi-skilled workers – maybe seasonal or pendular migrants – for many unfilled jobs, yet the Greek state (OAED) in its legalisation initiative preferred family men who have now brought over their families. Thirdly, both the Greek public and the government have feared permanent Albanian migration, yet they have prevented the circular migration of workers between Albania and Greece and encouraged family migration. The list of contradictions is almost endless: there is, in fact, no coherent policy on immigration, and neither are there even policy objectives on the issue.

Turning to the northern border regions of Greece, we have seen that it is there that exist the most extreme forms of Greek nationalism and the greatest problems for Albanian migrants. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is in exactly these border regions where the involvement of Albanians in the economy – even as employers of Greeks – is extensive and developed. The Greek state shows no interest in this matter and there is no information or serious research on it. Another major issue is the importance of remittances from Albanian migrant workers, which can help to promote the much-needed economic development of Albania. The Greek state has shown no interest in this matter and, again, there are no data. However, in the public debate over the last six months, when the idea of Albanian workers 'taking money out of Greece' has been discussed, a popular indignation occurred. Clearly, the thinking was that this is 'Greek money' which 'belongs in Greece'. There was no public discussion of regional economic development, of helping our neighbours the Albanians, or even of encouraging Albanians to stay in Albania. Nor was there any recollection of when Greece itself used to be supported by migrants' remittances. The fundamental issue was a nationalist one, of Greeks first. In fact, this seems to be the fundamental premise of all discussions on migration: facts, statistical data and serious independent research obstruct nationalist propaganda and political rhetoric. Perhaps, in the homeland of Plato and Aristotle, truth has been the real casualty of this Balkan comic tragedy.

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